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BIRD PROTECTION.

THE Sea-birds' Protection Act of 1869 met with general approval. Far from injuring man, sea-birds are positively beneficial to him. They act as scavengers at all sea-side villages; they fly inland and rid the farmer of noxious larvæ; at Flamborough and similar rocky coasts, they warn the mariner by their screams and clangour during fogs to give a wide berth to an iron-bound shore. Their elegant forms and lively evolutions in sea or air delight all eyes. It was high time that ignorant and brutal holiday-makers were restrained by law from wantonly massacring them in the breeding season, under colour of selling plumes for ladies' hats. But natural history journals, and the evidence collected by the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1873, disclose considerable difference of opinion with regard to protecting wild birds, the ordinary denizens of garden, field, and mountain. Some ornithologists would provide a close season for birds which others would ruthlessly destroy. A third party, again, would throw the ægis of protection around all alike, believing that nature would redress any apparent inequality in the abundance or diminution of particular species. The question is further complicated by the necessity for game, inasmuch as several of our finest native birds are inimical to the undisturbed rearing of grouse, partridges, and pheasants. Considerations of political economy are urged by game preservers with irresistible effect against those who would encourage the peregrine falcon to sweep round the Highland mountains; the magpie, jay, and hooded crow to diversify the monotony of winter scenery in England by their bright plumage. From a Return furnished to the House of Lords in 1873, we find that 1,641,960 head of game were sold in the United Kingdom by the licensed game-dealers in 1872, to say nothing of 580,388 wild-fowl. Over and above these, an enormous number of pheasants, partridges, and grouse must be included, shot by sportsmen for their own use; and it will be apparent that game provides very many tons of meat for the

people annually. The claims of the game preservers, therefore, cannot be slighted, as if their hobby ministered only to their own pleasure. The farmers must next be listened to, when they tell us that certain birds, such as sparrows and stock-doves, seriously injure the food supplies of the nation. They would have protection afforded to certain of the *raptores*, which are the natural foes of these marauders, forgetting that to exterminate the smaller birds is equivalent to suffering insects to devour crops and garden produce unchecked by nature's police. These conflicting interests look down with contempt upon the sentimental claims of those who love British birds merely for their interesting form, plumage, and habits; and yet the latter have also a right to be heard, apart from all æsthetical considerations, inasmuch as many of them are skilled naturalists and ornithologists, upholding theories respecting bird preservation and encouragement not altogether inimical to the welfare of the country, and capable without of being supported by a strong array of facts.

The ultimate question remains between two great parties—those who would extend a moderate protection to all our birds, and trust to the balance of nature maintaining itself; and those who would bestow their chief pains in preserving game, and for that end would have every eagle, falcon, crow, and other vermin, trapped or shot. Most lovers of the country, and of that feathered life which lends so great a charm to its woodlands, would object to espousing either side in all its hard and sharp exclusiveness. Is it quite impossible to rear sufficient game for all ordinary needs, and yet to suffer the owl to inhabit its hollow tree, the peregrine and sparrow-hawk to sail round the moor and delight the naturalist's eye, the jay to chatter in the plantation, the hooded crow to flap lazily across the road without an overwhelming dread of the keeper's gun? The gardener, in all ordinary cases, by a little care, can grow plenty of fruit without diminishing the songs of black-birds and exterminating those beautiful birds, the bullfinches. For ourselves, we would rather find fewer partridges in our fields than be deterred

from welcoming an occasional falcon, hawk, raven, or other winged 'vermin,' as the keeper calls them, on our rambles; though when their numbers grew excessive we would have them thinned. That good naturalist, Mr St John, was of opinion that great part of the pleasure of a country ramble consisted in being able to watch the varied flights and habits of different kinds of birds. He would have seen no special beauty in a moor tenanted only by grouse, though himself the keenest of sportsmen. Mr Knox, again, is eloquent on behalf of the wood-owl, the jay, and other of our larger birds which are ignorantly shot down by many keepers. 'One poacher,' he believes, 'will purloin a greater number of pheasants' eggs from a preserve in a couple of days than all the unhappy members of the genus *corvus* which the keeper will shoot during an entire summer.' Major Morant* at once cuts the knots over which bird preservers and game preservers wrangle. His advice is: remorselessly destroy all *raptores* and other birds which feed on game; shoot and trap also all mountain-foxes, polecats, weasels, stoats, hedgehogs, and rats. As for cats detected in the woods or preserves, they must at once be put to death. Even tame cats ought to be taxed, like dogs, and confined during the breeding season of birds. Thus, by the old Roman plan of making a solitude, peace is obtained. The maximum of game will be procured, and all the small birds will be saved from the attacks of any foe, save the universal debt all owe to nature. It is apparently a simple though a sweeping remedy; but the reader who does not care for excessive quantity of game will observe, it would exterminate a great number of the most beautiful and interesting of our native birds and quadrupeds.

Much as lovers of birds will enjoy the anecdotes and statistics of Major Morant, we cannot promise him a large following of disciples. He writes, however, almost entirely in the interests of game, and though he avows a general love for all birds, the grouse is manifestly his favourite. His remarks too are many of them only applicable to the extensive open moors of Scotland, where he tells us he has enjoyed the sole right of shooting over more than a hundred square miles of country. As for the balance of nature, which many justly maintain would be broken by the over-breeding of one kind—a theory upheld by such names as Waterton, Tristram, Gray, and Freeman—he laughs it to scorn: 'The more carefully we have read all this mass of evidence,' he writes, 'the more clear it seems to us that at the present time the game preserver is the only bird preserver, the only real friend all our birds have.'

The grouse disease is naturally a subject of investigation with him, and he rightly, we think, discredits the evidence of Dr Günther and Canon Tristram, that peregrines and hawks generally

seize, as a matter of course, the last and weakest bird in a pack of grouse, thereby aiding, where they are protected, in stamping out the disease. The bird which a falcon seizes is, Major Morant asserts, simply the hindmost grouse, which sprang from the heather some twenty yards nearer to the hawk, and is unable to regain his lost advantage. Just as the exclusive dependence upon the potato caused famine and death among the Irish, our author deems that the exclusive feeding on frost-bitten heather during winter, of great numbers of carefully protected grouse, produces the grouse disease. The remedy lies in feeding them with a more generous diet, with corn, when the weather grows severe. The disease, it seems, does not extend within ten miles of the western coast of Scotland, where, he tells us, the influence of the Gulf Stream is felt, and the frost, consequently, is less intense. Our author defends the extermination of the *raptores* and other birds obnoxious to him as a game-fancier, by the example of the wolf, which our ancestors extirpated. The analogy, however, does not hold good, for the wolf was killed, like the wild boar, because it killed, or would kill, human beings.

With a view to strengthening his extirpation theory, Major Morant puts all the creatures whom he deems hurtful to the game preserver, on their trial; but the verdict, we need hardly say, is invariably against the 'plunderer.'

Among the curious details connected with the mode in which the falcons take their prey, we learn that they often hunt in couples. A mallard was seen pursued by a pair of peregrines into a Scotch loch. The female knocked him down—probably by a blow of her wing, as he was not seriously injured—and then seizing him by the back with one foot, and a bunch of heather with the other, she held him down in spite of his struggles, and screamed loudly for her companion. He soon came up, but detecting a keeper some seventy yards off, hurrying to the fray, he gave a sharp note of alarm, and both falcons escaped, the mallard being only too glad to fly off apparently unhurt. To the true lover of nature, such a spectacle is full of interest; and—though perhaps sundry grouse remained yet to be killed by the noble pair—few in this case would be inclined to sympathise with the baffled keeper. Our author draws a frightful picture of the devastation this pair of falcons would cause. They will kill in a year at least one thousand birds! This he endeavours to prove by giving each falcon a bird a day, and adding a hundred more for each of the three young ones which they will rear from May until autumn, making in all one thousand and thirty birds. A pair of falcons have been seen, he asserts, to bring six grouse to their young ones in four hours; therefore the one thousand and thirty birds may be deemed, he thinks, even under the estimate. It must, however, be borne in mind that falcons can fast for a long period, and that their food is not exclusively game, so that

* *Game Preservers and Bird Preservers: which are our Friends?* By G. F. Morant. London: Longmans. 1875.

these arithmetical arguments fail when applied to the actual state of things.

The golden eagle, now very scarce, is arraigned for destroying lambs. A shepherd told Major Morant that in the Isle of Rum during one season he lost more than seventy lambs by eagles. His employer then bought him a gun, and in the next eleven years he killed forty golden eagles by watching under shelter near dead sheep. But as a set-off, the writer admits that eagles benefit deer-stalkers, by killing grouse and hares in a deer-forest. Buzzards are charged with snatching a gray hen from her young, or a grouse from her nest; but they will not materially reduce the number of grouse on a well-stocked moor. Sometimes they rob the falcon of its prey, 'the latter making no objection, in fact rather liking the fun of catching another bird.' The hen-harrier meets with scant favour at Major Morant's hands, though he acknowledges to finding the crop of one which was shot, full of wire-worms. Grouse are much thinned by them, he says; and on one occasion he caught with his hands partridges, which were terrified at the hen-harrier's low flight and resolute hovering over them.

The peregrine falcon still answers to its old appellation of noble, as it never condescends to eat carrion. Owing to its depending more upon loneliness of situation than inaccessibility, we are glad to hear that it is more numerous than generally supposed in the west of Scotland. Peregrines leave that part of the country from October to February, but black indeed is their character in our author's eyes, while they do remain. The Major tells us that they 'break up nearly every pair of grouse in the breeding season. We know a fine estate which has been let for the last three seasons for five hundred pounds a year, which for nine years was neither let nor shot over, though three and four keepers were kept on it all the time. The grouse never increased, and five brace was an unusual bag. Since three falcons' nests were discovered in the neighbourhood, and they were regularly prevented from breeding, from twenty to thirty brace has become quite an ordinary bag. The presence of these birds on the ground made a difference of eight hundred pounds a year to the proprietor, as the estate cost at least three hundred pounds a year to keep up, instead of bringing in a clear five hundred pounds.'

Peregrines are not much seen by day, as they feed generally just after daylight, and then retire to the most lonely rocks. Five out of six birds they take on the moors are grouse or black game, and they frequently kill birds for sport. The gulls, with their white conspicuous plumage, are often knocked down; and a kestrel has been known to be struck dead and left for mere wantonness. Major Morant would, however, have the peregrine tolerated in a deer-forest, simply because he kills grouse, which often alarm a deer just as the stalker has secured his position and is about to fire. Spite of these formidable offences, we would plead for the peregrine as a beautiful and gallant bird, a link between ourselves and our ancestors' sport of hawking. Professor Newton knew one which for several years haunted a plantation in Suffolk, and preyed entirely on

stock-doves; and this habit, at all events in a farmer's eyes, ought to be an extenuating circumstance in its favour.

Still harder measure is dealt out to the sparrow-hawk. He catches old grouse and partridges, we are told, in winter, and decimates young pheasants in summer. Canon Tristram fancies that it will live entirely on the wood-pigeon; but this, we fear, is hardly correct. We happen to inhabit an ivy-covered house much haunted by sparrows; and one morning in August, a sparrow-hawk, in attacking them, dashed through the glass of a drawing-room window, being picked up, much to our sorrow for so fine a bird, with a broken back, but doubtless greatly to the safety of ornaments and china. Even the little merlin appears to be a criminal of the deepest dye. 'We have seen one,' says the author, 'overtake in fair flight and kill an unusually fine old grouse in the month of February.' He 'is a dreadful bird-murderer.' Even his scarcity tells against him; he is only scarce 'because his real character has been found out.' For the well-known kestrel mercy is inclined to be shewn. Like the owl, the staple food of kestrels is undoubtedly mice; and surely this fact should condone minor offences, when either of these birds, on an emergency, helps itself to a young pheasant. But no! that bird too must at once be destroyed! For our part, we trust that wild scenery will long possess the pretty accessory of a kestrel hovering in the foreground. He and others of his tribe are at any rate perfectly welcome, once in a way, to one or two of our young partridges.

Halting at the *corvide*, we must protest against raven, crow, rook, Royston crow, magpie, and jay, being handed over indiscriminately to the keeper's gibbet. The raven, from his many interesting associations, claims a little protection; the good he does as a scavenger ought to tell largely in his favour. Doubtless, he is omnivorous in taste, and would respect the laird, were he to find him senseless on his moor, as little as he does the laird's young grouse. But he is a brave bird, and exterminators of the falcon tribe might do well to remember that he will, single-handed, attack the eagle and hunt him out of the country. Still, 'we have the raven and its kind to thank, if grouse are five shillings a brace instead of two, and if thousands of square miles in Scotland still afford neither sport nor rental to their owners.' Thus even the enormities of the *falconide* are forgotten when a raven is in question. Farmers acknowledge, or ought to acknowledge the beneficial services rendered by the rook in keeping down wire-worms and other destructive larvæ. But our author unluckily listens to a serious charge that rooks 'eat more game-eggs than all other birds on earth.' The usual verdict follows as a matter of course. Nothing can exceed his malevolence towards the unfortunate *corvide*. No excuse is of any avail. We hesitate about the hooded crow, though he is quite cunning enough to take care of himself. That that plunderer, however, can vary his diet, is shewn by our author, who writes: 'We must own we once opened the crops of some full-fledged young hoodies, and found them full of insects, principally beetles. But then,' adds our ingenious author, 'their ancestors had eaten eggs for so many years in that country that there were no birds left to lay any within three miles of their nest.'

In the book under notice, the author distinguishes lowland from mountain foxes, in his remarks on the quadrupeds that devour birds or their eggs. Sympathy for fox-hunting naturally enough biases his judgment in favour of the former. 'Rear rabbits in abundance for the lowland fox, and protect young game and poultry as much as possible,' he says, 'with wire-fencing; then they need not be shot down.' But with the mountain-fox it is a different matter. 'A keeper of our own one morning at daylight shot a vixen returning to her den, and in her mouth were a hen-grouse, two grouse's eggs, and two frogs.' He kills hares, too, and young fawns, and, worst of all, habitually kills lambs when rearing his cubs. 'It is not unusual to count twenty and twenty-five lambs' skulls round the cairns where they feed their young.' It is curious, however, that they never kill lambs near their earth. They will pass flocks of sheep close at hand, and kill and carry lambs from a distance of miles to their earth. So great is the necessity felt for exterminating hill-foxes, that it is customary for sheep-farmers in many parts of Scotland to have a grand annual raid. Shepherds collect from all quarters, and with the assistance of their collies circumvent their wily foes, and track them to the death. We endorse the statement that the mountain-fox is a dreadful pest, and ought to be destroyed.

The same doom is relentlessly pronounced on the polecat, stoat, and weasel. The polecat is a ranger over miles of country, and can be tracked in snow high on the mountains, as well as along the sea-shore. All the *mustelidae* are blood-thirsty, kill without stint, and often leave one victim, after merely sucking its blood, to do the same to another. Hence, our author condemns them, though even their services, in keeping down rats, might be taken into consideration. The poor hedgehog, from a game-fancier's point of view, must be ruthlessly destroyed. It is too true that he eats eggs. Here, however, we again bethink ourselves of his services in keeping down earth-worms and insects, and incline towards mercy. The wild cat is practically extinct in England, and so rare in Scotland that his case need not be considered; but Major Morant has a strong cause of complaint against the common cat when it has once taken to the woods. It is one of the worst enemies that game possess.

A perpetual battle is fought in the country between the friends and foes of two birds, both of which have a great tendency to increase—the wood-pigeon and the sparrow. Both are undoubtedly noxious to field and garden, and yet they possess counterbalancing virtues. Mr Cordeaux gave evidence before the Select Committee that the former picks up an enormous number of noxious seeds, which would otherwise fill the ground with weeds; while the latter keeps down insects, in conjunction with our other insectivorous birds. Both birds, however, must be kept in their place, to fulfil their parts in rural economy.

Major Morant's book possesses very considerable interest, and abounds in new and striking anecdotes of our rarer birds and beasts. We devoutly trust, however, that the author will not make many converts to his theories of *annihilation*. Luckily, all men are not game preservers to the extent of extirpating all game destroyers; and many who are fond of shooting, also delight in seeing the

sweep of wing and varied flight of the feathered children of the waste. In bird preservation, as in everything else, there is room for common-sense. Ruthless extermination speedily avenges itself, to say nothing of robbing rural scenes of some of their most beautiful and interesting features. In conclusion, we have further to add that the destruction of small birds, such as finches, for the sake of selling their wings and feathers as ornaments for ladies' bonnets, is simply atrocious, and a scandal to the age. On this point, we hope soon to have something to say.

FALLEN FORTUNES.

CHAPTER VII.—MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

'SOME one has been to call,' observed Mrs Campden to her companion, as, driving up the carriage-sweep within an hour or so of dinner-time, her sharp eyes remarked the recent traces of wheel and hoof. 'I should not wonder if it was Lady Blanche Ealing.'

'Mr Holt and the boys were going to the sports, were they not?' returned Mrs Dalton, not, it must be confessed, with any signs of overpowering interest in the question; for the last two hours her thoughts had been at home—watching for her husband's telegram; and neither the calls, nor her companion's conversation, had been able to secure the attention which she would fain have given to them.

'My dear Edith'—she spoke with an emphasis dictated by a due sense of the fitness of things—'you don't suppose I should have sent out anything but the dogcart with that Mr Holt? There has been a pair of horses here—look at the hoof-marks. It is very annoying if it has been Lady Blanche, for that will be the second time I have missed her. Such a charming person; the Earl of Beefampton's daughter, and, socially speaking, the lady of this part of the county.—Who has called, Marks?' asked she, of the butler, who received them at the Hall door.

'No one, ma'am—leastways, Mr Dimple came on some business about the church-sittings; but it would do just as well, I was to say, with his compliments, another day.'

'But some carriage has been here, beside the dogcart.'

'O yes, ma'am; the barouche. Master took out the young ladies in it.'

'Is there any message for me, Marks?' inquired Mrs Dalton, unable any longer to bear her suspense, though unwilling enough to interrupt the inquiries of her hostess.

'Yes, ma'am; a telegram: Miss Jenny has it.' The invalid girl had been for so many years a child-guest at Riverside, that in old Mark's eyes she was still Miss Jenny, and would probably remain so for ever. 'She is up in her own room, I think, ma'am.'

Mrs Dalton flew up-stairs to the apartment thus indicated, where she found Jenny upon her spring-

couch—the unwonted fatigues of the day having somewhat exhausted her frail frame.

‘O mamma! there is a telegram from papa.’

‘What is it, child?’ inquired her mother anxiously. Jenny put the slip of paper in her hand without speaking.

Shall come by the 6.30 train, as proposed. Nomp.

‘Why, what does he mean by Nomp?’

‘I am afraid it means he is not elected: he wished us to understand, without telling others, that he was no M.P.; at least, that is what I make it out to be.’

‘Dear, dear!’ sighed Mrs Dalton.

‘I am very sorry, upon papa’s account, mamma, because I am afraid he will be disappointed; but except for that—you know we have often agreed that he will be happier as he is.’

Mrs Dalton did not reply, but withdrew at once to her own room. There was something in the bareness of the communication that she had just received—though telegrams are not expected to be effusive—that chilled her, and seemed to give an additional seriousness to the missive of the morning. The latter had enjoined silence upon her as regarded her husband’s anticipations of the election, and even now that it was over he seemed to have a disinclination to make known the result. What did this reticence augur in one who had been wont—until of late months—to be the most frank and demonstrative of men? It was true that he had given utterance to no expression of annoyance, but the brevity of his message spoke to her in language that she alone understood, of the chagrin and bitterness that he was enduring. ‘No M.P.’ was all he had said; but no ‘Form’ with which the Telegraph Company could have supplied her would have been sufficient to contain her paraphrase of those few letters. She was consumed with vague apprehensions upon his account; for she knew not *why* her husband should be thus cast down, and that was the most bitter thought of all. She was far too wise, however, to consult upon such a matter with a third person, or to allow others to read her anxiety; and she presently descended to the drawing-room, to await her husband’s arrival, as though only dinner had been in prospect. She found the rest of the company already assembled there, and became at once conscious that something unpleasant had occurred among them. The quarter of an hour before dinner-time is proverbially an embarrassing period, but it was obvious that on this particular occasion it had been a very uncomfortable one. Her first glance, mother-like, was given to her own belongings, and so far as they were concerned, it seemed that the explosion—which had certainly taken place, for the air was still heavy with the smoke of it—had spared them, whatever harm it had wrought to others. Jenny was on the sofa with a book before her eyes, which would not have been the case—for she was bold as a lion—had she been under fire; Kate, with a flushed cheek, was looking out of the window, to avoid, as her mother guessed, gazing on the victim under punishment; Tony was standing by her with his hand fast clutched in hers, but his glowing face turned towards the scene of action; Mary Campden was smoothing her gown, an action of hers whenever ill at ease: all these it was

evident, were non-combatants. At the mantelpiece, with her back to the ferns and flowers which filled the useless grate, stood the mistress of the house, and by her side its so-called master was twirling his whiskers as though he would have twirled them off; and at some distance stood Jeff, with a pale face and angry eyes.

‘I am sorry to say, Edith,’ said Mrs Campden, addressing the new-comer, with gravity, ‘that my husband has thought proper—if the word proper can be applied to such a proceeding in any wise—to take your daughters with his own to Bleabarrow sports.’

‘Dear me! I am afraid my girls must have worried him very much to induce him to do it,’ said Mrs Dalton good-naturedly.

‘That is just what we did, mamma,’ said Jenny, looking up for an instant from her book; ‘it was all our fault, but mine especially.’

‘If my husband means to excuse his conduct at the expense of two young ladies’—

‘There were three,’ observed Mary quickly; ‘it was I who was most to blame, because I ought to have known you would not have liked it, mamma.’

‘I am not addressing myself to you, Mary, at all,’ continued her mother with dignity; ‘be so good as not to interrupt me.—I say it was shameful to take advantage of my absence, Mr Campden, to order the barouche and take these girls on such an abominable expedition.—It is natural, Edith, being my guest, that you should endeavour to make light of it.’

‘But, indeed, Julia, I don’t think it any serious matter,’ answered Mrs Dalton; ‘and, of course, the girls would be quite safe in your husband’s charge, in case of any annoyance.’

‘Well, well; you are easily satisfied, Edith,’ returned the other lady, throwing up her hands; ‘but if you knew what I know about such places—what I can’t help knowing from my position here—the sort of people that attend them’—

‘There was Lord Riversdale,’ observed Mr Campden dryly.

‘Indeed! I am sorry to hear it. But not his wife, sir.’

‘I am sure I don’t know whether she was his wife,’ said Uncle George, still more dryly; ‘there was a youngish woman with him.’

‘Do not heighten your disgraceful conduct by disreputable talk, I beg,’ answered Mrs Campden icily. ‘I am quite sure that there was no lady at Bleabarrow, except those you took there in my barouche.’

‘I really don’t think that the girls can have taken much hurt, dear Julia,’ reiterated Mrs Dalton, the peace-maker.

‘I don’t know as to *hurt*, Edith; but I suppose even your good-nature would draw the line *somewhere*. What would you have said, for instance, if any gentleman of your acquaintance had not only gone to such a place as Bleabarrow, but taken part in the sports; entered as a competitor with drunken persons’—

‘My good lady, no drunken person can run up hills,’ remonstrated Uncle George; ‘you don’t know what you are talking about; you don’t, indeed.’

‘Oh, thank you! I am sure you are the pink of courtesy; as polite a husband as you have shewn yourself a judicious father. However, I was addressing myself to Edith. I was asking

what she would think if you, or any one of your guests here, should have taken it into their head to compete with such ruffians ?'

'Well, really, I can't imagine Mr Campden doing that,' said Mrs Dalton ; 'and, of course, it would be very indecorous.'—

'The height of indecorum,' interrupted Mrs Campden, looking round triumphantly ; 'there ; were not these my very words ?—You see, Mr Geoffrey Derwent, that even those who are generally most ready to excuse you, have nothing to urge in extenuation of your conduct. Mrs Dalton quite agrees with me—that for a person in your position, an inmate of this house, and who has always been treated as one of the family, to compete with common men for gain'—

'I did not compete for gain,' said Geoffrey indignantly ; 'I gave the money—it was three pounds—to the man that came in second, and only kept the belt.'—

'That is, you did not take what you had really need of—you threw away, forsooth, three gold sovereigns, like a young millionaire—and only indulged yourself by mixing with the lowest of the low'—

'It was by my advice, Mrs Campden,' said one in cold and measured tones.

At the window, close to where Kate was, Mrs Dalton perceived for the first time that Mr Holt was also standing, half concealed by the curtain-folds. 'I own it was foolish and injudicious ; but it was I who proposed that the young gentleman should enter himself for the Guide Race.'

'That had nothing to do with it,' said Jeff sturdily ; 'I always meant to run, and should have done so whether any one had proposed it or not.'

'Of course you would,' continued Mrs Campden contemptuously ; 'to mix, as I have said, with the lowest of the low, and to earn their good opinion, was your only motive.'

'What ! has Jeff been electioneering, like me ?' cried a lively and genial voice. The speaker, who stood at the open door, had a bright and buoyant look, which by contrast with the faces around him, seemed to typify good-humour and ignore all angry passion.

'O John, how glad I am to see you !' whispered Mrs Dalton, as she sprang into his arms.

'Papa !' cried Kate delightedly. Everybody in the room, including, perhaps, even Mrs Campden herself, who had shot off all her sharpest arrows, seemed pleased to see John Dalton at that moment.

Having kissed his wife, he turned at once to Jenny, to prevent her rising to receive him, and embraced Kate and Tony, and then made his salutations to the rest like one who is used to be welcomed. A more conventional man would have addressed his hostess first, and his own family afterwards, but Dalton always behaved as his instincts prompted him ; and they fortunately happened to be good. He had not a handsome face, nor even an aristocratic one, yet it was one which attracted every eye. If you had seen him in the pit of a theatre (where, however, you never would have seen him, for he was not a man to patronise the pit), or on the crowded platform of a public meeting, you would have asked straightway, 'Who is that man ?' He had passed middle-life, and his face and forehead were deeply lined ; but neither, as you would have said, by thought nor care, so genial was the smile upon his lip, so lively the sparkle of his eye. His

complexion was dark to swarthy ; his hair, worn much longer than was customary, though he had neither moustache nor whiskers, was black as jet ; yet, so far from this producing a sombre effect, his appearance suggested gaiety. If he was not laughing, he always looked about to laugh, not at but with you ; his air and manner suggested not only the desire to please, but sympathy, and the readiest comprehension of your tastes and character. He was not conciliatory, for if you shewed antagonism—or even a slowness in reciprocating his advances—the sunshine left his face at once, and he set you down as a fool or a knave. I am bound to say, though sometimes guilty of a grave injustice in these hasty judgments, he was generally right. It was said by morose and ill-natured persons that John Dalton could be as 'nasty' in temper as anybody ; but this was not true ; he was hasty, however, and impetuous, and holding a deep-seated conviction that the man who could quarrel with so agreeable a fellow as himself must needs be a scoundrel, he behaved towards him accordingly. This conviction was a dogma of which—though more true than most dogmas—he had not been persuaded in a moment ; a long course of social success had induced it.

Dalton had had neither high birth nor much money to recommend him to the notice of the world ; yet had possessed enough of both to render a struggle for existence or position unnecessary ; he had not been compelled to set his feet on the lower rungs of the ladder, but had had them placed there by his father, who had been a man of fashion and a hanger-on of the court for a quarter of a century before his death. The sayings of 'Tom Dalton' had been considerably quoted before the reputation of his son in the same line of business had caused them to pale and fade away from the recollection of Pall Mall. Some old fogies were still found in that cynical neighbourhood who averred that John Dalton was not after all so clever a fellow as his father ; but such remarks were justly ascribed to the disposition of persons of a certain age to praise the past at the expense of the present. He did not indeed possess the biting satire for which his parent, the friend and rival of Brummell, was distinguished—though if you trod upon his tail ever so slightly, he could give an epigrammatic snap that had marked more than one heedless gentleman for life—but his ordinary talk was bright and vivacious, and he was voted 'good company' wherever he went. By profession he was a barrister, but he had never practised, or given himself the chance of practising ; he had never done anything but please himself in all his life, yet in so doing had somehow contrived to please everybody else ; not so much from his kind heart or his good-nature (though he could boast of both), as from a certain nameless charm of manner, which won over to him both man and woman. He was not a hero, nor anything at all like it ; but if he had been one, his *valet de chambre* would have been the first to acknowledge it. He was not a prophet (for he little knew what was at this moment awaiting himself) ; but if he had been one, his own people would not have denied him honour. His wife was devoted to him ; his children adored him ; and their sentiments had his fullest concurrence. 'If people are only nice to me,' he once confided to a friend, 'I am the nicest fellow people can meet.'

Unhappily, there are some people that cannot be nice, however certain may be the reciprocity, and Mr John Dalton had just been experiencing that fact during his canvass of the electors of Bampton.

'Well, Dalton, may we congratulate you as a British senator or not?' was Mr Campden's inquiry as he shook hands with his guest.

'You may congratulate me, my dear fellow, as having escaped being the representative of the most rascally constituency in England. It was a very narrow shave, however,' added the speaker briskly; 'another half-dozen votes would have done it.'

Mr Campden whistled mournfully, and the rest began to express their condolences after their several fashions, when Mrs Dalton broke promptly in with: 'John, dear, there is scarcely time, even as it is, for you to dress for dinner.'

'I know that, my darling, and therefore I am not going to do it,' whispered he.

'But Mrs Campden is so particular.'

'I know that too; but I'm not going to dress.—Pray, do not wait for me one minute, ladies and gentlemen,' added he aloud, and then left the room, not sorry, perhaps, notwithstanding all his presence of mind, that he had got over the declaration of his failure.

'My husband hopes you will excuse a morning-costume to-night, Julia,' said Mrs Dalton; 'nothing distresses him so much as coming in late for dinner, or keeping anybody waiting.'

'Oh, certainly,' returned Mrs Campden with a stately inclination of her head; she was pretty well aware how the case stood, and felt satisfied to get an apology out of Mr Dalton even by proxy. He was indolent, as regarded all physical exertion, and despised the small conventionalities on which his hostess set such store. She knew, or thought she knew, that all the members of 'county families' dressed for dinner every night, and was therefore resolved that her own folks should do so. So poor Uncle George—who during his early life had never worn 'black things,' as he called them, except on the rarest occasions—had every day to divest himself of his light summer clothing and don the broadcloth.

Mr Holt was always attired with the most scrupulous regard to the fitness of things; and Dalton, as her guest, ought to have been amenable to her wishes in this respect; but it was really very difficult, she complained, 'to get him to conform to the most ordinary usages of society.' She did not dare to be imperative with him, for he was one of the few people of whom she stood in dread; and when she had once attempted to—what she was pleased to call—reason with him, he had overset her with an epigram, which, if she had understood, she would have termed 'very conceited.' 'Madam, nobody minds what is one's suit so long as one is a *trump*.' Upon the whole, Mrs Campden had her reasons for not liking Mr Dalton, but she liked to have him at Riverside, from the popularity which his presence conferred upon it. She had more invitations from the county families—who, she had her suspicions, looked down upon her husband, for being a *nouveau riche*—when the Daltons were with them, and a better chance of getting a morning call from Lady Blanche Ealing; nor was it without some gratification that she found John Dalton

taking her into dinner, though his conversation flew over her head, and did not interest her half so much as the proceedings of the servants or the state of the *entrées*. On the present occasion, he was full of the topic of the election—not that he liked it, but lest he should be supposed to shrink from it as a sore subject—and very amusing in his description of his rival (and conqueror), one Mr Griggs. This gentleman, who was no great orator, had accused him of 'labouring under the advantage' of being a skilled legal debater, which was certainly a most unjust imputation, as Dalton had but once opened his lips in court in his life, and then only to move for a rule.

Griggs had also described Mr Disraeli as being 'the greatest living statesman of this or any other age.' And Griggs had also told a story on the platform so discursive that it had touched upon almost everything, yet had somehow not arrived at the point. During the progress of it, a voice—a somewhat thick and drunken voice, but still one with an evidently Liberal tone—had interrupted this narrative by a conversation with an imaginary friend, one 'Samuel,' supposed to be at the other end of the town-hall, which was crammed with Griggs' supporters. As the story went on and on, the voice grew more and more dolorous, and at last inquired: 'Samuel, do you like this story?'—a question answered by such a peal of laughter, even from his best friends, as to destroy Griggs' eloquence for the remainder of that evening.

It was by no means John Dalton's habit to monopolise the conversation, and it was only by public request that he now communicated these particulars; but he had never seemed in higher spirits. Only two persons at table were aware that he was acting a part, nor could one of these have detected it, but for certain exclusive information that he possessed. Mrs Dalton, on the other hand, knew that her husband was 'not himself,' although ignorant of the precise nature of what troubled him. Behind those sprightly tones, that joyous laugh, she detected that Black Care was sitting. The subtle instinct of much love had discovered it to her, else there was nothing to indicate it, except perhaps an unwonted grimace in her husband's humour.

For example, Mr Campden had inquired of him, since he had been last in London, whether town was empty.

'No, sir; there are still several toiling millions there, of our own flesh and blood.'

The tone of the Platform, the air of the would-be Representative, were admirably assumed: it was evident that the speaker was still contending with Griggs for the suffrages of the Bampton free-men.

'The club, however, had nobody in it, I suppose,' continued the laughing host, 'except Disnay?'

'Disnay is out of town.'

'Oh! that is impossible, Dalton; he told me himself that he had not left London for a quarter of a century, and then only to visit Brighton. Oh! Disnay can't be out of town.'

'He is, however, I do assure you—since there are no intramural interments—for he is dead!'

'Oh! Mr Dalton, how shocking!' ejaculated Mrs Campden.

'Yes, indeed, madam; but the gentleman could not help it. If you had known him as well as

your husband and I did, you would feel sure of that. He had no desire for change—except in one respect: even when he dined alone on a mutton chop, he would always dress for dinner.'

'And very right, too, I think, Mr Dalton.'

'No doubt, madam; and I hope he is at this moment reaping the reward of such undeviating propriety.'

'Well, I am sorry poor old Disnay is gone,' sighed Mr Campden. 'We might better have spared a better man.'

'I can't understand how that can be, George,' observed the hostess severely.

'When did the poor old fellow go off the hooks?' asked Mr Campden, too affected to notice a reproof which, under other circumstances, would have reduced him to silence.

'Well, his ghost was seen at half-past seven last Thursday.'

'His ghost!' echoed several voices.

'Yes; it was seen coming into the club at what had been his usual dinner-hour.'

'Oh, what nonsense!' cried Mrs Campden. 'How did they know it was his ghost?'

'Well, they knew it was not himself, because he was in morning costume. Everybody said that Disnay must be dead; and what everybody says must be true.'

I don't think Mrs Campden 'liked that story,' any more than friend 'Samuel' liked the narrative of Mr Griggs; but to the rest of the company it seemed droll enough.

When the ladies had withdrawn, John Dalton was even still more amusing; but it is my opinion that the talk of us men 'after dinner' should be as sacred as the conversation in the drawing-room, that takes place during the same period among the fair sex, and which has never been revealed to mortal man. The talk was mainly between John and his host, for Mr Holt said little. He was turning over in his mind what he should say presently in the smoking-room, or rather how he should say it, when he and Dalton should be left alone together.

CHAPTER VIII.—JOB'S COMFORTER.

The question of whether a 'little music' after dinner is socially a desirable thing or not, has been much debated: we know what a certain statesman thought of it—but then he was very bitter against every species of occupation that was not 'improving.' Musical people, of course, like to hear the piano going—if the performer understands her art—and there are a number of other persons who like to be thought musical, even if they are not, who hold their fingers up, and whisper 'Hush!' during the performance, and when it is over, exclaim: 'Oh, thank you; as if the notes had been five-pound ones, and they had pocketed them all. Nor do the rest of the company much mind it, if the pieces played are not too long. Old gentlemen will go on with their gossip much as usual, and old ladies will keep time with their heads quite cleverly, until they drop asleep, to be presently awakened by the sudden silence. But if there are any present with a hidden care, it is curious how often their secret is disclosed by a few bars of music. They can no longer laugh or talk, but are left the prey of the anxiety within, and it comes out in the

expression of their face, and in their very posture. Those earnest lines—

Dear friend, whom, grave or gay, we seek,
Heaven-holding shrine,
I ope thee, touch thee, hear thee speak,
And peace is mine—

were addressed to his piano by a true lover of it; and such persons, even when dejected, may be soothed by its sweet tones; but that is not the case with those who have no particular taste for music. It makes their sad thoughts more gloomy, while it takes away from them the opportunities of disguise. From John Dalton's face the smile has fallen away like a dropped mask, as he leans an elbow on the mantel-piece, and listens, or seems to listen, in the drawing-room at Riverside, to his daughter's singing. Kitty has a fine voice, which goes a great way up, and comes a long way down, and goes on without stopping for breath almost as long as a camel can go without water. Mr Holt, who is turning over her leaves, finds that post no sinecure, and being utterly ignorant of music, is never quite sure when she has reached the bottom of the page. Moreover, he cannot keep his eyes from wandering to that statuesque figure by the fireplace, that looks so cast down even now—when it has not yet heard the worst, nor even half the worst, that must needs be told to-night. Others in the room have their troubles: Jeff, pretending to be immersed in a book, is frowning over the top of it at Mr Holt, who must, he thinks, be an idiot not to see when a young lady would rather turn over her leaves for herself; and Tony, only enduring the music, as a lesser evil than going to bed, which, as he is well aware, would be the alternative. The windows are open, and he would gladly be in the open air, but the rain is falling, as it often does at Riverside, so that that avenue of escape is barred. Mr Campden has fallen asleep—which is foolish of him, as he will be all the more wakeful when the time arrives for his curtain-lecture, when all the wickedness of his afternoon's expedition will be expiated upon, over again; but the rest of the company are enthralled by the melody. Jenny is lying on the sofa with her eyes closed, in silent ecstasy, for the voice and the instrument are both perfection in their way; Mrs Campden and Mary give still more demonstrative signs of approval; and Mrs Dalton has yet an added bias as the mother of the singer. Every now and then, however, she steals a glance at her husband, and then that look of maternal triumph fades away.

'John, dear, you must be very tired,' she says tenderly, when the little concert is over and the ladies are retreating: 'I hope you will not have more than one cigar to-night.'

'I had some sleep in the train, and feel dreadfully lively,' he answers, brightening up; 'and I have got some business to discuss with Holt; so I am afraid I shall not be very early; be sure you don't sit up for me, darling.'

'George,' says Mrs Campden, 'you hear that Mr Dalton and Mr Holt have private affairs to talk about, so that there is no excuse for you spending half the night in the smoking-room. I am astonished at your permitting Geoffrey to accompany you to such a place at all.'

'I do it as a warning,' answers the host; 'that

he may remark for himself thus early the pernicious effects of tobacco.'

'It is easy to joke upon all subjects; but you are giving him a taste which is deleterious in itself, and which in after-life he will not be in a position to gratify.'

'My dear, he has got it already,' replies Mr Campden, as he troops off with the other males to the divan.

Under the apprehension of punishment, Uncle George would sometimes break into what those who did not know him would deem next kin to rebellion, but which was, in fact, only that state of wildness which prompts a man in for a penny to go in for a pound. There was still a cigar—which habit would enable him to enjoy—between him and the curtain-lecture.

The smoking-room at Riverside was a model of what such a place should be: it was on the upper floor, yet not so high up as to inconvenience those of mature age and impaired digestion who sought it after dinner; its windows commanded a glorious view of hill and river, when to look out was pleasurable; and when snugness and warmth were desirable, it possessed every element of comfort. It had lounging-chairs, rocking-chairs, conversation-chairs; and three sides of the room were lined with books, bound with great elegance, but all of small bulk, so as to be easily held in the hand. It was said by Mr Campden's detractors that his upholsterer had supplied these books with the rest of the fittings; but that was of small consequence, if he had not written them; they were, at all events, far better chosen than what we find on the bookshelves of most smoking-rooms, which are but too often the *Sporting Review*, in fifty volumes, and other kindred works. There was a sunlight in the ceiling, for use on winter-nights; but at present the apartment was lit by shaded lamps, placed on small round tables.

'Well, as these two gentlemen want to talk business, Jeff,' said Mr Campden, as they all lit their cigars, 'you and I will have a turn at billiards.'

The billiard-room and the smoking-room communicated with one another by double doors, one of which was of green baize, and through these the host and his young friend at once disappeared, leaving Holt and Dalton together. They sat down opposite to one another, at a table by the open window, with their legs stretched out before them, and their coffee by their side: to all appearance, a very cosy couple. In front of them rose the crags of Bleabarrow, just silvered by the rising moon. For a minute or two nothing broke the silence save the babble of the river, and the dull and almost noiseless click of the balls in the next room; both men's faces lay in shadow, but it could be seen that Dalton was gazing on the scene without, while Holt's elbow leaned on the table, and his eyes were shaded by his hand.

'This Bampton business is an awkward one for me, Holt.'

'Yes, indeed.'

'I fear it will have a bad effect with some of the doubtful ones. It was so important to appear to be important just at this crisis. And I spoke so confidently about the matter at the Board.'

'You had a right to feel confident.'

'Of course I had. If a score of those fellows had not turned out to be the greatest liars upon earth—Jenkins and Fuller, for example, voted dead

against me, though I had their written promise. I have got evidence against Griggs with respect to Fuller. There never was a clearer case of bribery in this world.'

'You are not thinking of a petition, however, are you?'

'Well, no; that would, under the circumstances, be sending good money after bad.'

'If you unseated Griggs, they would have a shot at you, you mean.'

'Perhaps; though I don't think they would hit me; but the fact is, I have got no money to petition with.'

'The thing stood you in, more than you expected, then?'

'My good sir, it cost me twice as much—three times. When it came to the last pinch, neither of us cared how deeply we were dipped. It was like being "pricked" at whist. I could not have imagined that there was such an excitement in the thing.'

'Many a great family has been crippled for generations, my dear Dalton, at the same game.'

'That is no sort of consolation to me.'

'Of course not; I only meant that you shewed no unsound weakness in putting the pot on; that you have nothing, in fact, to reproach yourself with.'

'Nothing? Yes, I have, Holt. It was not ambition, it is true, that sent me down to Bampton, but it was a piece of business of a very speculative kind. I feel that now, when the thing has gone the wrong way, I do assure you. Mind, I don't blame you, but I ought never to have risked it.'

'Indeed, my dear Dalton, you should not blame me: my ideas, as you know, by no means coincided with yours upon the matter.'

A short sharp laugh broke from Dalton's lips. 'You are not going to say that you always advised me not to go to Bampton, and prophesied what would come of it, are you?'

'Not at all, my good friend. But I protest against being considered the cause of your calamity. For my part, I thought your election a certainty, and, considering your position and prospects, well worth any reasonable sum. *Voilà tout*.'

'Let's stick to plain "English,"' answered Dalton sharply, 'which anybody can perceive is your mother-tongue.'

Mr Holt's pronunciation of the French language was imperfect, and the way he threw his hands out in deprecation of his friend's remarks was certainly not a good imitation of continental 'action'; but the reproof seemed unnecessarily severe.

'It is plain that you are out of temper, Dalton, and, therefore, unfit to discuss business matters, else I had something serious to say to you.'

'That is, you have some bad news to communicate.'

'I am sorry to say I have.'

'Well, spare me it to-night, at all events. I beg your pardon, Holt, if I said anything offensive; but the fact is, I hardly know what I say. When I think of what this abominable election will cost me—close upon four thousand pounds.'

'What!' exclaimed the other, in horrified accents.

'Not a penny less, upon my honour. I say, when I think of the money I have thus flung away for nothing, and whose money, I feel as though I could blow my brains out—that is, if I have any

brains, which, after such a piece of folly, may well be doubted. I felt ashamed, when I came back to-night, to look my own wife and children in the face.'

'Yet, you were doing what you thought the best you could for them.'

'No, I wasn't,' answered the other impetuously. 'I was gambling with the money I had stolen from them, in hopes to get it back again; just as the shop-boy does who robs his master's till; and then, to make restitution, goes to a betting-office and backs the loser.'

'Nay, nay; you stole nothing, and have robbed nobody, Dalton; so much, at least, you may comfort yourself with, under all circumstances. What you have done was at worst an error in judgment.'

'An error that will bring down those belonging to me, however,' went on the other vehemently, 'from competence, to what, by contrast, they will feel as poverty. What a dolt, what an idiot, I have been! To imagine that I was fitted to become a Leviathan of the City; that I could make a colossal fortune by mere wits and common honesty.'

'You have been honest enough, Dalton,' answered the other dryly; 'and that, as I say, should always be a comfort to you.'

'Comfort! How can you talk such stuff as that, when I tell you what has happened. You have no ties, no responsibility of your own, or you could not do it. I tell you, when I have paid this Bampton bill, I shall have frittered away, from first to last, three-quarters of my fortune—nay, of my children's fortune. I don't know what your bad news is, though I suppose it is more trouble about the Board; and if I lose my directorship—which, with this fiasco at Bampton, is more than likely—I have only one good horse left out of the whole string—the *Lara*. I snatched a look at the paper yesterday, and found the shares steadily rising. If that goes on, I may still recoup myself. I am bound to say, you did shew good judgment there, Holt.'

'To buy, and then to sell out; that is what I did.'

'I did not know you had sold out; but, at all events, you must have made a pretty penny.'

'Dalton,' said the other gravely, 'my bad news is about the mine.'

'The mine!' exclaimed the other, starting from his seat, and turning deadly pale. 'The *Lara*! You don't mean to tell me that anything has happened to that?'

'I got this from my clerk this morning,' replied Holt, producing one of the little notes, with the contents of which we are already acquainted, from his pocket. 'Of course, things may not be so bad as they seem.'

Dalton snatched the slip of paper from his hand, and read aloud: '*Mem.—Brooks has cabled as follows: "Sell Laras: whole concern a plant."*

'Brooks; who is Brooks?'

'He is the local agent at St José. The news is but too true, I fear. Brand is very careful.'

'Good heavens! you talk as if I had but fifteen pounds at stake, instead of fifteen thousand. A plant? That means a swindle. Did you know it was a swindle, sir?'

'I will not answer such a question, Dalton: I can make every allowance for your excitement, but I will not submit to insult. I believed in the

mine as much as you yourself did, up to six hours ago; and I had at one time almost as much money in it as you had. I always warned you to be content with a good premium, and to realise.'

Dalton did not appear to hear him, but kept his gaze still fixed upon the memorandum, with its few fatal words. '*Sell Laras*. What does the man mean by that? How can I sell them when I know the scrip is but blank paper?'

'Just so; and especially when everybody else knows it. But Brooks is Brazil-bred, and has a Brazilian standard of commercial life. It is too late, of course, to do anything of the sort, even if you would. There have been other telegrams beside this man's: I read in the City article of the *Times*—it lay within your reach in the drawing-room to-night, and I trembled lest you should have cast your eye upon it—that the shares had become unquotable.'

'Fifteen thousand pounds,' groaned the unhappy Dalton; 'and four thousand this week! Alas, alas! they will have nothing to live upon—my poor, poor darlings!' It was strange to see how the loss had stricken him. The lines in his face seemed to have already deepened, and of the gay *débonnaire* expression that had so characterised his features there was nothing left. Holt too was by no means unmoved. His face had paled, and if there was no pity in his eyes, that may have been through their incapacity of expression; his tones had pity in them as he replied: 'They have a friend in me, Dalton, please to remember—if I may venture to say as much. Whatever I can do'—

At this moment there was a knock at the billiard-room door, evidently administered with the butt-end of a cue; and Mr Campden's voice was heard bidding them good-night.

'I won't disturb your confab; but I'm off,' he said, rather lugubriously; for his time was come when he must need suffer avenging fires for the transgressions of the day.

Dalton waved his hand impatiently; and Holt, understanding the gesture, answered for him: 'Good-night.' He waited a little for his companion's acknowledgment of his offer of friendly aid, but since the other did not speak, he again addressed him: 'What I wished to say to you, Dalton, is, that I am a rich man. I got "a pretty penny," as you have suggested, by selling out of the *Lara*, as I wish from my heart that you had done; and my purse was tolerably well lined before. I beg to offer it—to any reasonable extent—at your disposal; to assist you, and those dear to you—Nay, I mean no offence'—

'There is offence,' exclaimed Dalton vehemently: 'everything from you is an offence just now. One thing only you can do—this moment—for which I will thank you.'

'Consider it as already done; what is it?'

'Leave me.'

Holt rose at once. 'You will shake hands, Dalton, at least. Though things have gone wrong with you, it is not my fault.'

Dalton neither moved nor spoke; but his eyes still fixed upon the crags without, looked fierce and hard.

'You will think better of this as regards myself, to-morrow, old fellow; I make every allowance for your feeling sore with everybody at this moment, even with a true friend.'

He threw a sharp glance round the room—the tables, the mantel-piece, the very book-shelves were all swept by it. 'Thank goodness, there are no weapons about,' he murmured; then softly closed the door, and left the ruined man to his own thoughts.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES.

STATISTICIANS assure us, that did we know the exact number of persons who annually disappear from the view and knowledge of friends and foes alike, and of whom no traces are ever obtained, we might well stand aghast, not only at the terribly long list of lost and missing individuals, but also at the seeming futility of the best directed efforts for seeking and finding them. A glance at the 'agony' columns of our daily newspapers, or the notice-boards of police stations, will indeed shew us that the mere disappearance from home of individuals is by no means a rare occurrence; and in many of these cases, very plain reasons for the absence of the runaways may be at least guessed at or supposed. But the cases we more especially allude to are instances of the regular 'mysterious disappearance' class, in which, for the most part suddenly, and in every instance without any reasonable or sufficient cause or excuse, individuals disappear from home, from their business haunts, and from the circle of their acquaintances, and leave not the slightest trace of their whereabouts or intentions. Even what we may call the ultimate fact of their death, is in the vast majority of cases never asserted or proved; and the friends of such waifs and strays of society have not, as a rule, even the melancholy assurance or satisfaction of knowing that the further hope of finding the lost is utterly futile and vain. And thus the date of the disappearance in time becomes one which, as days, weeks, and years roll by, carries with it the ever-increasing remembrance of an event at once sad and terrible in the doubt and uncertainty which enshroud it.

To the question, 'What becomes of them?' detective science may hazard in answer some speculations and several ingenious theories, fitting more or less exactly the ascertained facts of each case. But such speculative philosophy is useful only as a guide to the inquirers, and can afford but little help in framing a decisive answer to the above query. It has happened, however, that in some few notable instances, the science of the medical jurist has aided, in the most powerful and satisfactory manner, in elucidating the history of disappearances, through its testimony to the identity of discovered remains with the presumed missing subjects. And no records of fiction could shew more interesting or startling illustrations of the tangled nature of evidence, and indeed of human affairs generally, than the records of medico-legal experience in respect of the light which science brings to bear on questions of the likeness and identity of the dead with that of the once living. We thus may find, in a somewhat roundabout manner, one

answer to the query regarding the whereabouts of missing men and women; for when death claims such, it frequently devolves on the man of science to say whether the body is or is not that of the missing person concerning whom society, as represented by the family or by the law, may have made much and anxious inquiry.

The notable case of Eugene Aram furnishes, for example, a case in point. The deceased or murdered man, named Daniel Clarke, a shoemaker of Knaresborough, disappeared suddenly in the month of February 1745; and on no reasonable and satisfactory hypothesis could his absence be accounted for. Thirteen years afterwards, when the disappearance had well-nigh been forgotten, the discovery of some human bones in a cave near Knaresborough, together with some suspicions which had been aroused by the words of one Houseman, Aram's accomplice, brought the occurrence again before the notice of the public. And as is well known, the discovery of a second skeleton bearing marks of violence, as indicated by Houseman's confession, resulted in the apprehension of Aram, and in his being arraigned at York, in August 1759, for the murder of Clarke.

Thus the chain of circumstantial evidence was so far strengthened, and the crime traced very near to Aram's door. And yet the most important links in the chain were supplied by the evidence of the medical jurists, as tending to prove the correspondence of the remains with those of a man of Clarke's age and appearance. Aram's defence, singularly able and lucid, did not avail him against the testimony of the anatomical data of the last century. Thus his allegation that the skeleton was that of a female, was entirely disproved by the medical evidence; and this evidence also tallied in a singularly complete manner with the account given by Houseman of the manner in which the murder was committed. So far, therefore, as testimony corroborative of the facts brought out by ordinary witnesses was required to substantiate the identity of the remains, medical science lent its powerful aid in clearing up this example of a mysterious disappearance.

Whilst the work of the man of science in this respect can never be said to vary in importance, it may nevertheless exhibit very great variations in the manner in which it is carried out, and in the points to which its attention is more specially directed. A very noteworthy case, startling to excess in some of its features, was tried in London in 1831, and rested, so far as the identity of the subject of the trial was concerned, on the presence of the *front teeth* in a very old woman. This woman, Caroline Walsh by name, consented, after much persuasion, to live with a female friend named Elizabeth Ross, and her husband, in Goodman's Fields. Walsh arrived at that place on the night of 19th August 1831; and from that date disappeared completely from public view. Inquiries immediately made by the relatives of the missing woman, resulted in their ascertaining from Elizabeth Ross that Walsh had gone from home on the day of her disappearance, and had never returned.

On the evening of 20th August, or that of the day

following the disappearance, an old woman, who gave her name as *Caroline Welsh*, an Irishwoman like the missing woman, and corresponding in most particulars to the description given of the latter, was found in a destitute and almost dying condition in the neighbourhood of Goodman's Fields. She was conveyed to the London Hospital, and it was there ascertained that she was suffering from fracture of the hip-joint. Her injuries proved too much for her reduced condition, and she died in hospital, and was duly buried therefrom.

When Ross was arrested on the charge of murdering *Caroline Welsh*, she at once said that the woman who had been conveyed to the London Hospital was her old friend; and although her statement seemed plausible enough at first sight, it was found to be decidedly inconsistent with facts, when subjected to due scrutiny and analysis. Then also, direct evidence of the murder of *Welsh* by Ross was forthcoming from Ross's son, who testified to witnessing the suffocation of *Welsh* by his mother; to seeing the body of the murdered woman lying, on the morning of the 20th August, in the cellar of the house in Goodman's Fields; and also to seeing his mother leave home on the evening of the 20th carrying a sack, which apparently contained something heavy.

The accidental presence of a *Caroline Welsh* thus complicated this case of mysterious disappearance in a most curious manner; and the complication was rendered all the more intricate, firstly, by the fact, that no body corresponding to that of the missing woman could be found in any of the London dissecting-rooms; secondly, by a similarity between the dress of the missing woman and that of the hospital-patient; and thirdly, by both women having possessed baskets (in which they hawked smallwares) exhibiting a close likeness to each other, although that of *Welsh* had no cover, whilst *Welsh's* basket had a lid. Thus, to similarity in name, in dress, in occupation, and in certain possessions. And although strict inquiries revealed differences in the habits, physical appearance, and bodily conformation of the women, and in their respective birth-places, yet obviously the case was one in which, unless additional evidence was forthcoming either to confirm or refute the doubts as to the identity of *Welsh* with *Welsh*, the prisoner Ross would clearly profit by the conflict of evidence, and the ends of justice might ultimately be defeated.

One remarkable circumstance in the history of the murdered woman at length assumed the position of a crucial test. It was conclusively proved that *Caroline Welsh* had very perfect front teeth—an admittedly unusual feature in an aged woman. *Caroline Welsh*, on the contrary, had no front teeth; and, moreover, as was proved by an examination of her body, the sockets of these teeth had obviously been obliterated—through the modifying processes which are well known to occur, especially in the aged—for a very considerable period. The scientific evidence clearly established this latter fact in the history of *Caroline Welsh*; and as the existence of the prominent front teeth in *Caroline Welsh* was as firmly established, the guilt of the prisoner Ross was brought home to her—although, indeed, the fate of her victim remained a mystery more easily guessed at than solved.

Sometimes the researches of the scientist actually in the first instance lead to the clearing up of a disappearance. Thus, the examination of a skeleton found deeply imbedded in the sand of the sea-coast at a certain Scotch watering-place, shewed that the person, when living, must have walked with a very peculiar and characteristic gait, in consequence of some deposits of rheumatic kind, which affected the lower part of the spine and pelvis. The mention of this fact induced a search through some old records of the town, and resulted in the discovery that a case of mysterious disappearance had been duly noted; the subject being a person whose mode of walking had made him an object of attention, and whose fate, but for the observant eye of the anatomist, might have remained wholly unknown.

One of the most famous cases in which medical science has aided the effects of the law in determining the identity of human remains, was that known as the *Waterloo Bridge Murder*. This case excited much interest and curiosity at the time (1857); and (as in a crime of the most recent date) the chain of circumstances which led to the discovery that a murder had been committed, shrouded the matter still more impenetrably in mystery. A carpet-bag which had been dropped over *Waterloo Bridge*, London, with the obvious intention of disposing effectually and silently of its contents in the Thames, landed instead, on one of the buttresses of the bridge, a few yards above the current. When examined, the bag was found to contain portions of a human body, the pieces, consisting of bones with flesh attached, numbering twenty-three in all. It formed an important object of inquiry to ascertain whether the identity of the remains could be determined, with a view to connect them firstly with any known case of mysterious disappearance; whilst their due examination might in the second instance lead to the discovery of a crime, by affording some clue as to the probable nationality, rank in life, profession, or trade, general circumstances, and mode of death of the victim.

Pieced dexterously together by medical experts, the portions contained in the bag were found to be those of one and the same body; but the head, a large portion of the spine, the hands and feet, and some parts of the chest, were wanting—these missing parts being exactly those by means of which the human subject is usually and most readily identified. But notwithstanding these serious gaps in the continuity of its structures, the mutilated frame was discerned to be that of a full-grown man, whose height must have been at least five feet nine inches. To this first conclusion the experts were led by careful measurements of the existing parts of the skeleton, together with relative measurements in place of those parts which were wanting. The body was further found to present no peculiarities, the result either of natural malformation or diseased action, whereby any clue to its more particular identity—as in our preceding example—could be obtained; but it presented evidence to shew that the remains were those of a man of very dark complexion, the hair covering the body being of a black colour. The examination detected the presence of a stab or punctured wound in the left side of the chest, between the third and fourth ribs; and what perhaps formed the most important result of the

inquiry consisted in the fact, that the experts were able to pronounce, from the characters of the wound, that it had been inflicted, in all probability, during the life of the individual. The surrounding highly suspicious circumstances of the occurrence, undoubtedly favoured this latter supposition; whilst the clumsy and unscientific manner in which the remains were mutilated—the bones being *sawn through* near the joints, instead of being disarticulated at the joints by the simple division of the ligaments—shewed that no theory of the remains having formed the subject of anatomical research, could for a moment be entertained. The probable date of death was also in some degree fixed; the examiners being led, from the appearance of the remains, to state with certainty that they had been dead for at least three weeks before the date of the examination, which was conducted on 21st October 1857.

Thus the medical evidence elucidated a number of facts, which, taken together, afforded a useful commentary and test of the value of other and purely circumstantial evidence. The articles of dress which were inclosed in the bag along with the remains, were of foreign make, and were cut and torn in numerous places. No definite clue was ever obtained which could lead to the detection of the murderer, or of the motives which prompted the crime. The remains were thought to be those of a Swedish sailor, whose disappearance might cause little or no stir even amongst his associates; whilst the mere fact of his disappearance in a foreign land, would also militate against the chances of his identity being established. A supposition which received much credence at the time of the occurrence, was that which presumed that the deceased, as a foreigner, had in all probability fallen a victim to the assault of some secret society, of which he may have proved to have been an unworthy or traitorous member.

It is by no means an uncommon occurrence to find the remains of the lower animals gravely brought under the notice of the legal authorities, in mistake for those of man; and the skill of the zoologist and microscopist may sometimes be called in to aid in the unravelling of some complicated cases; whilst, as exhibited in the Waterloo Bridge case, even the question of race or nation—only to be authoritatively determined by the ethnologist or naturalist—may involve considerations of the utmost import in accounting for or explaining some cases of identity and disappearance.

The subject before us is not without its ludicrous aspect, in respect of the mistakes which are sometimes committed, and of the excitement created by the supposed discovery of human remains under highly suspicious circumstances, when in reality the remains are those of animals, sometimes of very inferior structure and grade to man. A short time ago, a case of what was at first believed to be atrocious murder, and in which the body was believed to have been disposed of by burning, was quietly settled by the medical examination proving that certain incinerated skull-bones were those of a *sheep's head*; whilst in another case, which occurred in London in 1838, the usual amount of wild speculation was excited by the discovery of what was supposed to be a human hand in a City dust-bin. The excitement attending the discovery, however, was timeously quieted by the assurance from reliable authority, that the

supposed hand was in reality the paddle or fore-limb of a *turtle*, which doubtless had perished in a manner perfectly consistent with the demands of justice and good taste.

THE MONTH: SCIENCE AND ARTS.

THE Lords of the Treasury, with a commendable regard for economy, have appointed a Committee to look into the Meteorological Office, and inquire whether the ten thousand a year voted by parliament for that establishment is well spent or not. The chief points for inquiry are: Has the great mass of observations hitherto collected led to the discovery or confirmation of meteorological laws? Has any good come from the storm-warnings? In case these two questions are answered in the affirmative, there come up next: Are the results worth the large sum which they cost annually? and, On what system should the office be carried on? And further, would it not be possible to spare a portion of the annual ten thousand pounds for the Scottish Meteorological Society? This, translated out of official language, is to be the scope of the inquiry. It is wide enough to embrace all that can be said on the subject of government aid to meteorology, whether for or against. If the aid is to be continued, we hope the claim of Scotland will be properly considered. Readers of this *Journal* are already aware that the Scottish Meteorological Society have done and are doing excellent work.

An attempt has been made to get up a sensation about the Polar expedition by suggestion that the ships are exposed to unusual risk, that it is indispensable to communicate with them next spring, and that the crews are entitled to special rewards in addition to the double pay they are now earning. The truth of the matter is that there is no occasion for alarm. The ships are so thoroughly equipped that they may stay out three years and keep all hands in comfort.

The Royal Society opened their session with a further Report from the *Challenger*, which informs us that, in addition to discoveries on land and water, the exploration of the sea-bottom is still carried on. The science of geology and of natural history has profited largely, and when the enormous collection of specimens already sent home, with those that are to follow, shall have been examined and reported on, it will be seen that in scientific results the voyage of the *Challenger* excels all others. Another paper, on the Physiological Action of Vanadium, by Mr Priestley of Manchester, shews that the peculiar metal in question has properties which 'act upon the central system of the spinal cord and medulla oblongata,' and may thus become useful in medicine. Dr Tyndall marked the new year by reading to the same Society a paper on 'The Optical Department of the Atmosphere, with Reference to the Phenomena of Putrefaction and Infection.' He delivered it also as a lecture at the Royal Institution. The subject is interesting and of high importance; but for the present we

can only state that it proves to absolute demonstration that putrefaction cannot go on in air perfectly filtered; that is, entirely free from floating particles, or 'moteless.' In no instance did any sign of life appear in the infusions shut up in a chamber of moteless air.

The Royal Agricultural Society have just published number twenty-two of the second series of their *Journal*, full, as usual, of valuable articles, among which is one on that much-dreaded pest the Colorado Potato-beetle, by Mr H. W. Bates, F.L.S. This article is the more instructive as it has a coloured plate shewing the beetle in various stages of its existence; and it is easy to see that in each and all of those stages there can be no concealment, for the creature is conspicuous by its bright colours. Mr Bates gives a summary of its history and habits, of the natural and artificial means by which it may be destroyed, and shews reason for believing that its introduction into England is hardly probable. It is possible, he says, that a few stray specimens may arrive; but the creature's habits and transformations are such as to lead to speedy detection. In Southern and Central Europe, where the climate more nearly resembles that of the native country of the beetle, special precautions may be necessary. But, to quote Mr Bates, 'American potatoes are imported into Britain only for seed-purposes, and in remarkably clean condition. Newly arrived casks which I saw opened contained not a particle of refuse, and no pellet of soil large enough to conceal a hibernating beetle.' If, however, beetles should fly on board ship in the harbour of New York, and find a snug lodging for the voyage, they might fly off at Liverpool. Even in this case, Mr Bates thinks 'there is little probability of their propagating and spreading in this country.'

'On a Method of obtaining Motive-power from Wave-motion,' is the title of a paper published in the *Transactions* of the Institution of Naval Architects. The author, Mr Tower, has studied the action of waves, and found it to consist of two elements, a back-and-forward motion, and a rising and falling motion; and he shews theoretically that a heavy weight may be so suspended on board a ship that it shall be set in motion by the movement of the waves, and thus become the moving-power of machinery to propel the vessel. 'The quantity of power to be obtained under such conditions,' says Mr Tower, 'would be simply and directly as the distance through which the weight moves. The fact that external force would have to be used to compel the weight to move through a greater distance than it would otherwise move through if left to itself, does not in any way alter this fact; for, theoretically, no power would be lost in causing the weight to oscillate through a great or any distance. All the energy consumed in the acceleration of the weight would be completely returned during its retardation.'

A working model tried in Torbay, demonstrated the truth of the theory, and if sea-waves were always uniform in height and length, there would be but little difficulty in working it out to a satisfactory solution. But it is believed that the difficulty occasioned by irregularity of wave-motion may be overcome; and Mr Tower shews that an ordinary sailing-ship of eleven hundred tons displacement when loaded, provided with a swinging weight of one hundred tons, could be

driven through the water by a screw propeller worked by the revolutions of the weight. Suppose a ship so constructed to meet, outward-bound, a south-west gale at the mouth of the Channel, where waves roll eighteen feet high and five hundred feet long—'Instead,' says Mr Tower, 'of beating backwards and forwards under reefed top-sails and foresail, losing ground every tack, our wave-power ship would be able to put her head to the sea like a steamer, having actually in such a sea six hundred horse-power at her command, which would enable her to go ahead in the teeth of the gale, and secure a good offing.'

In the open sea, and with moderate head-winds, the ship would make nearly seven knots an hour. When winds blow fair, the revolving weight would be secured, and sails would be hoisted. In the belt of calms on the equator, about three hundred miles wide, known to seamen as 'the doldrums,' there is commonly a smooth swell of waves three feet high, which would suffice for a speed of between four and five knots an hour, whereby the belt would be crossed in less than three days.

As our readers will remember, this is not the first time that the notion of getting power out of waves, or out of the rise and fall of the tides, has been mentioned in these pages. There is something eminently gratifying in the thought of making head-winds help ships on their way, so that in a voyage to Australia or the Pacific they should be always going ahead. Mr Tower estimates that in the whole voyage the weight and the machinery would be working perhaps forty days. Competent judges think that his views admit of practical application. A trial will most likely be made. We shall gladly assist in making it known when successful.

In a recent address to the Newcastle-on-Tyne Chemical Society, the President, Mr Pattinson, stated that Korting's steam-jet apparatus is extensively applied to various purposes in chemical works and other factories in this country, on the continent, and in America. It consists of 'a jet of high-pressure steam applied somewhat like a Gifford's injector, through a series of conical tubes, for the purpose of moving or forcing gases and liquids in any required direction. It has been used to force air through the gas-producers in connection with a Siemens furnace, through the fires of ordinary steam-boilers, in the ventilation of workshops, mines, drying-rooms, and other places, as an exhauster in gas-works, and is to be applied to the carbonating and other furnaces of chemical works in the Newcastle district.' Its effect on an ordinary steam-boiler fire is a great economy of fuel; and a case was mentioned of a Root's boiler and a Cornish boiler which in two hundred and thirty hours, or twenty consecutive days, consumed (omitting fractions) seventy-eight tons of coal in raising the steam required for the works; but which, when the Korting apparatus was fitted, consumed not more than thirty-six tons in the same space of time, and did the same amount of work with the Root's boiler only.

Mr Clapham, a member of the same Society, gave an account of his visit to soda-works in France, in which he found much to praise. In England, owing to the high price of labour, the quantity produced is more regarded than the quality. 'On the other hand,' remarks Mr Clapham, 'the French, with their dear materials, their

small but many times multiplied apparatus, the constant application of the chemical laboratory to every process, the cleanliness and care of their frugal and saving workmen, are producing chemical products which, although in nearly all cases dearer than in England, are certainly of superior quality, from which the English manufacturer may take a lesson.

Manchester has a Scientific and Mechanical Society, at which descriptions are given of new inventions. A recent one is the use of sound for telegraphic purposes. In this case a steam-whistle is made to deliver long or short sounds at pleasure (as the Morse telegraph makes dots and dashes), and these being combined according to a pre-arranged code, it follows that messages may be sent from ship to ship at sea, or from a ship to the shore. In a fog, every ship would be able to make known her position to the others, and what she was doing, which would be a safeguard against collision. And it is obvious that, even in clear weather, much time would be saved by whistling a message instead of sending it by a boat, considering that the whistle can be heard at a distance of three miles. Apart from ships, it is easy to imagine many cases in which a talking telegraph would be useful; and we are told that the practicability of the invention was demonstrated by sending 'several verses of poetry' into a lecture-room from a whistle at a distance.

Another invention which should be interesting to weavers everywhere, is Bowker's patent self-acting punching-machine for repeating Jacquard cards. In the ordinary machine, a skilled workman must be employed during three weeks or a month to fit it up and get it into working-order. The new machine, which can be packed in a small box, is always ready for working, and will prepare from twelve to twenty thousand of the perforated cards in a day; while the old process will not produce more than twelve hundred. Another advantage consists in the rapidity with which changes of fashion may be followed: 'A manufacturer will bring out new designs for each season, and if any of them meet with success, he will frequently be able to take large and remunerative orders, if he can execute them with despatch. Aided by the machine, he can get cards for a large number of looms in a day or two, instead of being weeks over them, as on the old system, and can thus start his looms quickly, and send his goods into the market in time for the season.'

We learn from an address delivered to the Horological Society by Sir E. Beckett, that the great clock at Westminster is the best clock in the kingdom—that each dial has four hundred square feet of surface—that the minute hands are eleven feet long—that, although the hands are all counterpoised, the entire weight of hands, counterpoises, tubes, and wheels, having to be moved at every beat of the pendulum, is not less than a ton and a half (this, of course, includes the four dials)—that the going weight is one-and-a-half hundredweight, and the clear fall one hundred and seventy feet—and that the winding-up, which takes five hours, is done by hand. According to the annual Report of the Astronomer Royal, the time kept by Big Ben shewed an error of less than a second on eighty-three per cent. days in the year. The notion that this clock is 'always behind' is therefore erroneous.

It is a common saying that everything we eat or drink is adulterated. Watchfulness in buying is therefore highly necessary. We learn, from a statement in the *Journal* of the Chemical Society, that sham coffee is manufactured from tough dough, squeezed into little moulds, and baked until the colour becomes dark enough to deceive the eye. Real coffee-berries when small and worthless are improved in colour by rolling them about with leaden bullets in a cask. The green berries too are treated by a colouring matter. In coffee sold ready ground, the difficulty of detecting adulteration is greatly increased; beans, beet-root, carrots, and carrot-like roots, are roasted and mixed in large quantities with the genuine article. In the south of Europe, especially in the provinces of Austria, figs are roasted in enormous quantities and sold as coffee.

A ready test of ground coffee is to shake up a spoonful in cold water. If it be genuine, it will remain floating a long time; whereas chicory and some other preparations sink immediately.

A contemporary suggests that the health of sailors and the comfort of life on board ship would be promoted if the practice were introduced of eating the rats which swarm in most ships. In China and some other parts of the world, rats are part of the daily food of the people, and an instance is given of a shipmaster who eats a roasted rat every morning at breakfast. We shall be glad to receive opinions from those who have tasted this generally despised rodent. Perhaps Mr Frank Buckland could say.

Measures are in progress for a renewal of the so-called Sub-Wealden boring, by which, as some readers will remember, it is hoped that an important geological problem may be solved. The problem briefly stated is this: In France and Belgium there are certain Devonian and Carboniferous strata found in a wavy form, with prolongation towards the west, where they are covered by chalk and the sea. It is believed that they extend under the Channel and the south of England, concealed by other formations, until they reappear in the coal-bearing strata of Somersetshire. If this be true, as is maintained by some of our ablest geologists, there must be seams of coal underlying a breadth of country all the way from Namur to the Mendip Hills; and it is with a view to discover this coal, and explore the strata generally, that the deep boring was undertaken, and is now, after six months' pause, to be resumed. It has been aided by grants of money from the government, the Royal Society, and private individuals, and deserves the success which in many quarters is earnestly hoped for.

The Indian government are about to establish at Simla an observatory for the observation of physical phenomena, under the direction of Colonel Tennant, F.R.S., an able scientific officer. There are certain observations which can be made with advantage only in a tropical climate and at a high elevation; and this is especially the case with observations on the heat of the sun. There is strong reason for believing that the sun's heat varies from month to month and from year to year; and it may be that there is a periodicity in the heat as well as in other solar phenomena. The new observatory may, therefore, be inaugurated with plenty of work.

ODDLY ADDRESSED LETTERS.

A NUMBER of years ago, a post-letter arrived in Edinburgh, addressed in foreign handwriting to 'M. TOMPITS, Edimbourg.' As no special direction was given, the post-office officials were at a loss to understand who this M. Tompits could be. As far as known, there was no such person in the town. At length, by pondering over the matter, and judging from the sound of this extraordinary name, it was discovered that the letter was intended for our old and esteemed friend, Mr Thomas Potts, ordinarily and jocularly called Tom Potts—alas, now deceased, but remembered for the geniality of his character. The letter was from a foreigner to whom he had shewn some kindness, but who had understood his name to be simply Tompits.

It is mentioned that something of the same kind once took place regarding a letter which arrived by post in London, directed to 'SROMFRIDEVI, Angleterre.' There was no such person as Sromfridevi ever heard of; but on a little consideration, and judging from sound, it was obvious that the foreign writer of the letter meant Sir Humphry Davy; and this proved to be the case.

We are reminded of these amusing incidents by an article in a late number of one of the London newspapers, the *Daily Telegraph*, referring to the introduction of 'Spelling Bees,' as a means of an instructive evening amusement. A 'Bee' is an American term for an assemblage of acquaintances to execute some piece of work, such as sewing articles for a newly married couple, or for some social amusement in which the quality of amusement or mutual instruction is concerned. A 'Spelling Bee' signifies a competition in spelling words, the best spellers being rewarded with suitable prizes. Spelling Bees are, no doubt, a little childish and ridiculous, but looking to the number of badly addressed letters, and the bad spelling that one occasionally meets with, we do not think that Spelling Bees are to be at all discommended. We would simply suggest, by way of supplement, that besides a competition in spelling, there should be a competition in the art of directing post-letters in a manner that is clearly intelligible; so as, if possible, to give less trouble to letter-sorters and letter-carriers. This brings us to a circumstance mentioned by the London newspaper above referred to.

Following the example of the English General Post-office, the French Administration des Postes maintains a staff of "blind clerks"—that is to say, calligraphic experts who are supposed to be able to decipher the most illegible handwriting, and to deduce sense and meaning from the apparently hopeless chaos of orthographical blunders. Some years since there was returned to the French Dead-letter Office an epistle which had gone the round of every seaport in the Levant, and the ambiguity of whose superscription had baffled a legion of postmasters. It was addressed "J. DUBOIS, Sultan Crete." Now, what could this mean? The suzerain of the island of Crete is the Sultan of Turkey, but his majesty's name is certainly more like Abdul Asiz than J. Dubois. Five out of the six blind clerks in the Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau confessed their entire inability to solve the mystery of Dubois, who, on the face of the envelope at least, was proclaimed a Cretan sultan. But to the sixth among the band of experts there suddenly occurred

a happy inspiration. "Fetch me a *Navy List*," he said to a subordinate. The *Annuaire de la Marine* was brought. The expert looked up *Sultan*, but alas! there was no ship bearing that name in the French navy stationed at Crete, or anywhere else. The wary cryptographer cogitated for a time, still turning over the pages of the *Navy List*. At length he rose triumphant to the occasion. "I have it," he cried: "this letter is addressed to J. DUBOIS, sur le *Tancrède*;" and to M. Dubois, who was a quartermaster on board the good ship *Tancrède*, on the Pacific station, the letter was duly forwarded. The missive was from the quartermaster's brother, whose education, so far as regarded spelling, had seemingly been of a strictly phonetic nature, and who had written down his relative's address, not in accordance with the commonly received doctrines of orthography, but just as the words had sounded to his ear.

MY NATIVE BAY.

My native bay is calm and bright,
As e'er it was of yore,
When, in the days of hope and love,
I stood upon its shore!
The sky is glowing, soft and blue,
As once in youth it smiled,
When summer seas and summer skies
Were always bright and mild.
The sky—how oft hath darkness dwelt,
Since then, upon its breast;
The sea—how oft have tempests woke
Its billows from their rest!
So oft hath darker woe come o'er
Calm self-enjoying thought;
And passion's storm a wilder scene
Within my bosom wrought.
Now, after years of absence, passed
In wretchedness and pain,
I come, and find those seas and skies
All calm and bright again.
The darkness and the storm from both
Have trackless passed away;
And gentle as in youth, once more
Thou seem'st, my native bay!
Oh, that, like thee, when toil is o'er,
And all my griefs are past,
This ravaged bosom might subside
To peace and joy at last!
And while it lay all calm like thee,
In pure unruffled sleep,
Might then a heaven as bright as this
Be mirrored in its deep!

ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1823.

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